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of the mountaineers. This ancient code of conduct has undoubtedly exercised a restraining influence on the clansmen and helped to soften the grim realities of anarchy. None the less it was our experience that, like other codes of chivalry and laws of war, it was honoured as much in the breach as in the observance. This was perhaps a recent development, born of the crisis of the times or of the influence of Western ideas unaccompanied by Western conditions. Be this as it may, what most impressed us in the way of life of the Albanians was not the stray survivals of their ancient customs but the extent to which they lived without a law at all.

If anarchy was the way, poverty was the standard of their lives. They subsisted mainly from their flocks and upon maize, grown wherever the valleys offered soil for their wooden ploughs to scratch, or traded in the towns against hides and dairy produce. Their fare was simple; their clothing homespun; the forests gave them fuel, and, with the rocks of the mountain, their building materials. They lived, Turkish fashion, on the ground, and, beyond a few rugs, mattresses, and cooking utensils, required no other furniture or amenities. Tobacco, salt, sugar, and coffee, were their luxuries; weapons their chief expenditure and pride.

But besides this pastoral economy there was another source of wealth from which the mountaineers, and especially the chief men among them, drew their strength. Bad communications made coercion difficult, but the poverty of the clans made the power of money great. Elsewhere this might have been of no great moment, but in the Balkans the clashing interests of the Powers afforded frequent opportunities for holding the Central Government to ransom, or indulging in mercenary enterprise on behalf of the foreigner. Such enterprise had ever been a time-honoured means of livelihood among the Albanians; and, if the Eastern Question had caused the ruin of their merchants, it had also created boom conditions for their mercenaries. Such indeed had been the influx of gold and arms into the mountains in the past hundred years that it was perhaps not too much to say that the whole economy and strength of many of the clans had become dependent on subsidies received for "political

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662 services" from the Central Government or from foreign Powers. Nor were the chiefs the only ones to gain, for the profits of a mercenary leader depend on the strength of his following. The rival chieftains competed for the support of the smaller fry; and these passed in and out of the orbits of their betters according to their hopes of wealth or fears of defeat. Thus in time the foreign gold circulated down to the poorest shepherd.

Such practices were lucrative and naturally congenial to the Albanians; for they despised manual labour as a task for women, regarding only fighting and its preparations as man's work. Mercenary enterprise, moreover, was conducive to social stability, for the chief derived his wealth not from the exploitation of his clansmen but from the subsidies of the foreigner or the spoils of war. A common interest in his success induced a spirit of partnership among his followers, while the fierce competition of rivals encouraged his liberality or corrected his avarice. At the same time each accession of strength which he derived from his foreign paymasters was almost automatically balanced by the complementary reinforcement of his rivals by other foreign Powers. Mercenary enterprise thus proved to be an expanding economy; and, to guard against the dangers of a slump, the rival chiefs were not above stimulating the flow of subsidies by timely collusion.

The Albanians were of the Balkans; and so the natural insecurity of their lives, inherent in the anarchy and poverty of their circumstances, was aggravated, if at times enriched, by the struggle of the Powers to spread their influence along the road to the East. Life under such conditions could not but be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"; yet from its very
181 grimness the Albanians drew their strength. Anarchy developed their independence, not only in their relations to other men, but in their thoughts; for they were free from all those prejudices, taboos, and inhibitions which limit the outlook of those who belong to an organised community. Poverty lent a severe pragmatism to their thought, so that they judged only by results, knowing that, if man cannot live by bread alone, he cannot even subsist without it. Insecurity sharpened their awareness and deepened their understanding of human nature, trying their values by the acid test of survival.

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hearths at night. We watched their unfamiliar ways, studied their starkly realist opinions, and by a hundred different arguments preached war against the Germans. Abas Kupi meanwhile worked hard to strengthen his faction, rewarding friends, corrupting enemies, and gently menacing the undecided. Above all he sought to impose a truce between the warring clans whose blood feuds threatened the unity of the Zogist cause. The *Hakmeria*, or blood feud, had its merits, for it was a great teacher of manners and of respect for the dignity of the individual. No Albanian indeed could strike another with impunity, and even schoolmasters had been known to pay with their lives for a hasty cuff in class. But the feuds took a heavy toll of life and suffering; and we met men from weak clans who had scarcely left their homes in twenty years for fear of neighbours with whom they were "in blood". Under the monarchy some attempt had been made to suppress the feuds; and they had begun to decline before the growing power of the Central Government. With the collapse, however, of Italian rule the mountaineers had returned to their ancient anarchy, and now blood feuds flourished on every side. As foreigners we stood in no danger from them, but they were none the less an important factor in our daily life. A guide would take us several hours out of our way to avoid crossing the territory of a clan with which he was "in blood"; chieftains would suddenly postpone a meeting, alarmed by rumours that their enemies were lying in wait; and sometimes at tribal gatherings we would see a man pass the coffee cup to his neighbour under his knee — the supreme mark of contempt for the man who had not even tried to avenge a wrong.

The persistence of the blood feuds presented Abas Kupi with a serious problem, for every time a clan was won to his cause their blood enemies would side automatically with his rivals. He therefore laboured patiently to reconcile the contending parties, and in accordance with the Law of Lek invited them to submit their feuds to his arbitration. There was, moreover, an ancient tradition that a general truce, or *besa*, might be proclaimed like the medieval "Truce of God" if a region was

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in danger of foreign attack. To secure such a *besa* and so restore the unity of Mati was now the Agha's foremost aim.

We were joined every now and then by groups of notables who would accompany us on the march for two or three days. Among them came one, Hafuz Effendi, a shrunken, bird-like creature, who had been deputy of Mati under the Italians. Like many of the older Albanians Hafuz still wrote for preference in the Arabic script and for our benefit recited the opening *surahs* of the Koran. He had been on Essad Pasha's staff in the last war and since then, in the time-serving tradition of the Ottoman bureaucracy, had worked in turn for Fan Noli, Zog, and the Italians. During the occupation, indeed, he had twice betrayed Abas Kupi's hide-out to the Italians, and was even held responsible for the arrest of some of the guerillas. Now, however, that the Italians were gone, he piously proclaimed himself a democrat and had come to offer his services to Abas Kupi, in whom he discerned the paramount influence of the day. Such time-serving exceeded, even among the Albanians; and, despite his great age, he was mocked unmercifully by young and old. He was a guest, however, albeit self-invited, and while he was with us no one would have thought of harming him. Abas Kupi let him stay with us two days and then dismissed him to his house, but kindly; for it was now his policy to forget the past and to stretch out a hand to all who would support him.

Germanic names, such as Allemani and Walter, were found among the Mati clans, derived, so it was said, from Crusaders who had settled in Albania on their way to the East. The Walter clan had declared for Abas Kupi, but they were still suspect to the Zogists; for they had long been blood enemies of the King. One of them indeed, named Bekir, had tried in 1924 to assassinate Zog in the Tirana Parliament. He had only succeeded in wounding him and, to escape capture, had then locked himself up in the Parliament lavatory. There he had reloaded and prepared to stand siege, singing patriotic songs to keep up his courage. None of the deputies had dared to break in the door, for they knew that Bekir was armed;

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of aghas. The title of agha was a courtesy title bestowed by the populace. By special provision of the Turkish Government there had been hereditary aghas since the Turkish conquest at Botush in Yugoslav Kosovë; these, says their representative in Albania, took precedence of all bajraktars in Albania and Kosovë.

Given the pride of a bajraktar in his standard and of a 'first family' in its descent, a clash between the two was not uncommon. When this took the form of an ordinary isolated quarrel, elders were called in from another tribe to judge between the disputants. Their own tribe did not venture to try the issue, knowing that it might suffer, as outside elders could not do, for an unwelcome judgement. If the elders failed to effect a settlement, shooting began between the parties, both bajraktar and 'first family' being followed by his own kin. A man related to both followed the one to whom he was more nearly related; this at least in theory. In practice they often showed a naive sense of which side their bread was buttered and joined the disputant with the stronger following.

Sometimes a long struggle for precedence developed between 'first family' tenacious of its ancient privileges and an ambitious bajraktar. In Lurë, for instance, both the Catholic Zef Doçi of Lurë e Vjetër (Old Lurë) and the Mohammedan Ibrahim Gjoçi of Kreje had long been rivals of the Mohammedan bajraktar Hakik Ali Meta. In 1926 Gjoçi had the largest following, because he maintained the tribe with surpassing generosity. Within a decade he ate himself out of house and home, and then lost nearly all his power, retaining only the tribesmen's affection and respect for his past benefits. He therefore ceased to hamper the ambitions of the bajraktar. Zef Doçi, the 'first family' in the whole tribe, was a more obstinate rival, as his power rested less on his lavish doles than on his descent and personal wisdom. Ancestor after ancestor had been 'captains' in Turkish times, whereas Gjoçi and Meta had never been 'captains' till created by King Zog. The bajraktar began by undermining Doçi's position with traditional doles. He sent sheep to the poor at every festival and went guarantee for them in the shops during crises such as weddings and burials. 'So they all follow me now', he told the visitor with disarming simplicity. He had resorted to direct action, seizing every chance to kill off the guns in Doçi's family. In 1933 some brigands, who had killed one of Llesh Doçi's men, were harboured in a mountain sheepfold by the bajraktar's shepherds. Together with Zef and other relatives,

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Llesh ambushed the brigands and wounded one. As one of his men was killed, the two sides were 'one and one', equalized, and could have made peace. But the opportunity was too good for the bajraktar to miss. By the law of the mountains Llesh should not have attacked the sheepfold until he had asked the bajraktar to withdraw his protection from the brigands and had met with a refusal. So the bajraktar vowed he would not make peace but would have Doçi's blood for the 'injury'. Soon he learned that Zef Doçi and all his male relatives were at a wedding in a poor man's house. Under cover of darkness his followers crept up to the house and shooting through the windows killed two and wounded four of the wedding guests. A year later the bajraktar managed to have a third man from Zef's family killed, leaving Zef almost alone.

In his charities this bajraktar of Lurë took no account of the recipient's religion, helping a Catholic as readily as one of his fellow Mohammedans. If he discriminated between the two he would gain nothing from the Albanian government, which ignored religious differences. In Turkish times discrimination in favour of Mohammedans would have furthered his designs by winning approval from the Turkish government. He found, however, that the proved loyalty of his family to King Zog's stood him in even better stead. A marriage had also proved a useful asset. Metë Hoti, the best shot in Lurë, would have been expected to join Zef Doçi, because his mortal enemy, Dalip Kaci, followed Zef's enemy, the bajraktar. Unfortunately for Zef, Metë had a sister married to one of the bajraktar's household. Since joining Zef meant shooting at the bajraktar's men, Metë feared to have the blood of his nephews on his hands and continued reluctantly, side by side with his mortal enemy, to follow the bajraktar.

The result of the struggle can be shown by the numbers of the levies raised by the three captains for the Albanian government in 1926, 1933 and 1935 respectively. They were as follows:

	1926	1933	1935
Zef Doçi	150	50	23
Ibrahim Gjoçi	300	40	32
Bajraktar	4	300	400

It would have been interesting to revisit Lurë to see the effect on the position established by the Italian occupation. The bajraktar,

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as King Zog's man and therefore anathema to the Italians, must have lost much ground. Zef Doçi as his enemy and as a good Catholic may have regained some.

According to Albanian tradition there were no bajraktars before the Turks came, and headmen were literally the head men of their tribe. This would seem to be confirmed by a document dated 1403 which cited Alexius Kastrati, as headman of the tribe of that name, in a list of Albanian chiefs who were rewarded by the Venetians with gifts of cloth. Albanian tradition further alleges that the Turks aimed deliberately at weakening Albanian chieftains. So, on the one hand, Sultan Mahmut destroyed thirty-six kins, root and branch, and his son Mexhi a further number. On the other hand, Sultan after Sultan appointed bajraktars, ostensibly as military leaders but really as pillars of Turkish rule. By recognizing their nominees as administrative heads as well as military leaders they reduced the old headmen to a subordinate position, and thereby lessened their chances of engineering a successful revolt. This policy would explain why some bajraktars were social as well as administrative and military leaders, and others were not. The former presumably descended from headmen who were complaisant enough to accept Turkish rule, and the latter from strong men of lower position in tribes where the headmen were recalcitrant. The Turks must have trusted that pleasure in their official rank, and the increased possibilities of money-making would keep the bajraktars quiet in their turn. Recognizing the hereditary character of the bajraktar was another shrewd step on their part. As the non-hereditary delis and spahis aged or died, a hiatus unfavourable to their rule might arise. When it was a case of 'the bajraktar is old or dead, long live the bajraktar', they never lacked an agent. When King Zog, as Minister Ahmed Zogu, began to unify Albania he saw the danger from the numerous bajraktars. Accustomed to lead their tribes to war, unaccustomed to any restraint by a central authority, ignorant and untravelled for the most part and generally of autocratic temper, all of them might not have been willing to submit to the new government in Tirana. Methods of bringing them into line with or without their own wish had, therefore, to be devised. If one was willing to serve loyally, the government treated him as the Turks had long before treated a pliant headman. It made him an officer in the reserve, the modern equivalent of the ancient bajraktar, gave him the half-pay of his rank, and provided

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for his sons and nephews, granting them state scholarships on which to complete their education or military training abroad, and finding them employment as officials or officers when they came home. The most notable example of this 'pliant headman' type of bajraktar was Hakik Meta of Lurë, who was himself a captain and had several relatives who were officers in the Albanian army. If a bajraktar was likely to be recalcitrant, King Zog's government tried two methods. The first was a duplication of the system applied to the pliant headman type with reserve rank, half-pay and provision for relatives all included. Thus Gjon Markagjoni, the Hereditary Captain of Mirditë, who rebelled openly in 1921 against the central government, was rewarded for his subsequent submission by being made a lieutenant-colonel in the reserve. Cen Elezi of Dibër, whose father was killed in battle against King Zog's men in 1924, was later made a major. But fewer of the relatives of such men were educated at state expense, and the education given to those few was not so advanced—it seems to have been dangerous to put too much knowledge into their heads. And when they were ready for office they were kept in outlying unimportant districts, 'safe' areas.

The second and far more important method employed by King Zog with possible recalcitrants was the Turks' very own. The usual favours of rank in the reserve, half-pay and the provision for dependants were bestowed on a number of tribesmen who had given proof in the past of their loyalty to the régime and were 'strong' enough in the military sense to combat the influence of the obstinate bajraktars. Captain Mark Miri of Gurrëzë, who was a counterpoise to the Gjetë Coku family of Breg i Matit as well as to the bajraktar, was one example of this type. So was Major Miftar Selmani of Lumë, who was supposed to balance his fellow-villager, Muharrem Bajraktar. The transfer of the administrative powers of the bajraktars to state officials completed their weakening. The unity and stability which characterized King Zog's Albania to an extent surprising in a Balkan country were the best commentary on the policy.